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## PLAYFUL IMPOSTURES.

Fiction is one of the great elements of life. We cannot constantly present ourselves as exactly what we are. There is an incessant craving to be something else; to go out of ourselves, for however short a space, or to whatever little apparent purpose or end. We see this in the sports of children, where, by the mere prompting of the instinctive mind, each readily and easily assumes and sustains a feigned character, and all becomes a masquerade. We see it in the social meetings of the adult, where each sets himself to be something a little more refined and pleasant than he is in his common moments, and the whole are gratified by the temporary sinking of the homely reality. It is not affectation, it is not an aping of superiority, which is here concerned; it is merely a tendency to seek a relief and a pleasure in the exchange of the actual for the ideal. An immense proportion of the innocent pleasures of life arises from this source: jokes, badinage, raillery, are various forms of it, which, though sometimes carried to a bad excess, are all excellent in moderation, and under the government of good feeling. I thoroughly believe that life would be a desert, but for the little fictions thus mixed up with it; which everybody understands, and which therefore do nobody any harm.

It is necessary, however, to keep a rigid watch upon this disposition, lest it pass beyond the line of innocence. And the ethics of fun is well worthy of serious consideration. Wherever a jest has the least chance of hurting any one's feelings, much more wherever it tends to damage of a more practical kind, it ought of course to be suppressed. Nothing will justify its being carried forward, unless its whole consequences can be foreseen, and these are clearly limited to a little passing merriment.

In some places, and in certain little societies, there sometimes reigns a habit of what is variously called hoaxing, trotting, and selling; that is to say, practising upon the faith of individuals by stories possessed of no real foundation, or leading them into expectations which are to end in ludicrous disappointment. It is an extension of April fooling; and though certainly we can suppose more dignified amusements, yet if all are willing to take and give in this way, and nothing but a laugh ever accrues, no one can well find fault with the system. The handsome little town of — lives, as far as mirth is concerned, upon jests of this kind, and broad grins have as yet been the only consequence. When I was last there, the predominant drollery was a dinner which had been given by a little party of wags to one of their set, noted for his numberless successes in quizzery, the occasion being his completing a small villa for his own residence. He had been led to understand

that his friends were to crown the feast by presenting him with a piece of plate: and they were true to their word; but it was a brass-plate for his door, containing a name for the house, in which the familiar name of the owner bore a part! Now, if a little joke of this kind can enliven the natural dulness of a country town for a week, and the subject of it laugh among the loudest, and even extend the fun, as this gentleman did, by putting the door-plate to its proper use, there is certainly some good done, and no harm.

Another case.

On a misty January morning I found myself seated at the breakfast table of my kind-hearted friend Sir Hugh Melford, along with two other guests, and the ladies of the family. It was the morning of an appointed shooting party, and a third guest was expected.

'Pray,' said I to Miss Selina Melford, 'who is the other gentleman that Sir Hugh expects to make up his set?'

'Oh, it is John Stirling, eldest son of our neighbour Sir Samuel Stirling; an excellent person, whom we all like very much. We lately played him an amusing trick.'

'What was that?'

'Why, the last time he came here to shoot, we dressed up a female figure, which we planted at table, with its back to the light; and when he arrived, we asked him to sit next to *that lady*, and introduced him to her. He bowed, and made a few remarks, without discovering anything but that she was rather stiff in her manners. We had such fun about it afterwards!'

At this moment Mr Stirling was announced, and Sir Hugh was asked out for a moment to see him. Presently our host returned, ushering in Mr Stirling, and introducing as his companion and friend a remarkably handsome mustached youth, whose name was given as Count de Leudher, an officer in the Austrian service. Greetings passed between Mr Stirling and the ladies, and the count made his bow, but unfortunately, from ignorance of the language, was unable to pay his respects in words. Very soon we were all once more seated, and breakfast went on right mirthfully, the ladies evidently being greatly interested about the stranger.

So unconscious did he in the meantime appear to be of the chat going on around him, that 'very handsome and interesting!' 'his melancholy air reminds one of Thaddeus of Warsaw,' and other sufficiently broad compliments, passed freely among the ladies, in implicit reliance upon his inability to understand their words.

'Selina,' said Miss Melford, 'this must be the person we heard of being at Stirlingfield?' She asked the question of Mr Stirling, and was answered in the affirmative. I was then informed that, about a fortnight ago, their enthusiastic friend, Miss Fanny Bloomfield,

coming to visit them, had met in the coach a fine-looking youth, whom she took for a foreign count at least, if not a prince, and who had alighted at the Stirlingfield gate. He had, she said, eyes like the dove, hair like the raven, and a look that might command an army! They had had a great deal of talk on this subject; and the curiosity of the Misses Melford was only increased when Fanny Bloomfield, going soon after to Stirlingfield, wrote to them that the foreigner was staying there—that he was a count, belonging to the Austrian service—and the most fascinating person she had ever met. 'Really,' declared all the ladies with one consent, 'Fanny has gone not a bit beyond the truth.' I remarked a slight smile play round the mustache of his countship at this remark, but readily supposed that he might understand a few words of English, although unable to speak it.

I finished breakfast, without for a moment dreaming that the count was anything but a count, or Mr Stirling anything but the downright good-natured man he appeared to be; but in the drawing-room, to which we soon after adjourned, Sir Hugh took an opportunity of telling me how the case really stood. The stranger was, although in the Austrian service, a Briton, and a cousin of Mr Stirling—in fact, the son of another gentleman of the neighbourhood—and the affair was an attempt on the part of Mr Stirling to revenge the trick lately put upon him by the Misses Melford. 'Oh, very well,' said I, 'let the joke be carried on by all means. For my part I shall enjoy it, if it were for nothing else but as an overthrow to my friend Miss Melford, who tells me, at every difference we have about matters of fact, that she is *always* right, and therefore *I must be wrong*.'

'That's right,' quoth Sir Hugh. 'It will be a good joke indeed if she be taken in. Let us by all means keep it up till after dinner if possible.'

The shooting party now set out with its proper train of attendants, and myself as a civilian attaché; and for four hours we rambled along the high grounds in quest of hares, pheasants, and moorowl. What success my friends met with it is of no use to rehearse; neither is it important that I should specify the various adventures and misadventures of the party. Suffice it, that we met in a little lodge to lunch at two o'clock, and during the repast, could speak of nothing but the delusion now in progress, which, however, we all feared would not hold out till dinner, as there were ten chances to one that some communications among servants would betray the real quality of the count. By and by shooting was resumed, and I, after accompanying the party a little longer, proceeded to the castle, in order to write some letters before dinner. I entered the drawing-room, where the ladies sat with a mind and ears prepared for all imaginable clamours; but behold, all was safe. They were innocently telling Lord Montresor, who had come upon a morning call, 'what a delightful young German count had arrived from Stirlingfield that morning; that he spoke only German, not a word of English,—not even French. They hoped he was, like all Germans, musical, and that would help to make the dinner pass pleasantly;' and so forth.

I felt thankful, and joined in the conversation. His lordship afterwards met the shooting party, was let into the secret, and invited to stay to see it developed at dinner, but, to his great regret, was under a prior engagement, so that he only could indulge in a hearty laugh at the affair impending over his fair friends, and then leave the party to their own enjoyments.

At seven, the party assembled in the drawing-room

for dinner, when the impression formerly produced by the count was, if possible, deepened, as he now appeared in an attire that set off his person to the best advantage. Before this, we had settled upon the procedure to be observed in the dining-room, and it had also been deemed right that our hostess, Sir Hugh's mother, should be let into the jest. I may remark, as a proof of the success of the deception, that this lady had some difficulty in believing us when we undeceived her, fearing that the only trick lay in this new direction. The count, as presumably the person of greatest consideration present, was accorded the honour of leading out the lady of the house. Dinner passed without his saying more than a few words in German to Mr Stirling. Some attempts were made by one or two to make a conversation in French; but unluckily they were all failures. At length the servants left the room, and the denouement of the plot took place in the manner agreed upon.

'Mr Stirling,' said I very formally, 'did your friend ever meet a person who is never wrong? I wish you would tell him that Miss Melford says she is never wrong, never deceived, and never makes mistakes.' She looked a little queer at my pointing her out to notice in this manner, and her puzzlement increased when she saw smiles on the faces of all but the ladies present.

Nevertheless she answered, laughing, 'Well, it is the case. Somehow I am never wrong. I am sometimes almost distressed at my own correctness, as if it were what a human being ought not to be able to boast of.'

'But do you think you *could* not be deceived in anything?'

'No—I think not. I never *am* deceived, and therefore never *could* be.'

'Very well,' said I to Mr Stirling, 'you hear it from her own mouth. I beg you will tell it all to your friend in his own language.'

Mr Stirling did so in a few words; the count smiled hard, and then Sir Hugh rose up.

'My friends,' said he, 'I feel impelled on this occasion to resort to an old fashion, and ask you to join me in drinking the health of a gentleman whom it has given my mother and myself much pleasure to see here to-day. I am sorry he does not understand our language, but I hope he will do so by the time he returns to our neighbourhood; though this is not necessary to make us wish for a repetition of his visit. I am afraid his day with us has been a somewhat stupid one on this account; but I trust he will believe that this is matter of regret to us, and that, as far as good-will can go, we are anxious to make it up to him. Without further preamble, I propose the health of *Captain John M'Evans*!'

The familiarity of the name now announced broke the plot at once. It is needless to say the sensation was tremendous; that the ladies looked a thousand discomfitures; and that the rest of the company, bursting through all rule, raised a shout of merriment which penetrated to the servants' hall, where it was at first mistaken for the alarm at some direful accident.

It is but fair to the ladies to say that, after the first moment, they entered heartily into the humour of the affair; so here, too, some good accrued, and no harm.

When, as in the above case, the subject of the deception is one who stands very strong in a belief that he cannot be deceived, the enjoyment of the joke is of course greatly enhanced to third parties. Such was the character of an imposture which was practised a number of years ago by a lady of remarkable representative talent upon a counsellor in high practice at the Scottish bar, and of literary celebrity also, who had expressed his belief that she could not, with all her dexterity, impose upon him. The tale was told in 'Blackwood's Magazine' by Mr Galt, with a strong dash of his own peculiar manner, but in the main faithfully; and to this record we resort for a brief sketch of the incidents.

One day when the counsellor (whom Galt calls Mr

Jamphler) was to entertain a party, inclusive of the young lady, at dinner, he was told, while dressing for that meal, that two ladies desired to see him on urgent business. Joining them in the library, he found an elderly matron, in tortoiseshell spectacles, and a huge black bonnet, attended by a blushing young one. The senior female announced herself as Mrs Ogle of Balbogle, came to Edinburgh on purpose to take the benefit of counsel from the learned gentleman, whom she forthwith proceeded to compliment in a most extravagant style. 'But mine's a kittle case, Mr Jamphler,' she proceeded, 'and it's no a man o' sma' capacity that can tak it up.' If her late husband had been to the fore, she would not have needed to trouble anybody; 'but he has won awa out of a sinfu' world, and I'm a lanely widow,' with much more to the like purpose.

Mr Jamphler, getting impatient, suggested that she had better consult her agent.

'My agent!' she exclaimed; 'ye're my agent—I'll hae'nae other but you—you hae come here for nae other purpose than to confer wi' you anent my affair—'

'Well, but what is it—what is it?' interrupted the counsellor.

The lady then made him sit down beside her, introduced her daughter, and gave a sketch of her family connexions, which produced another burst of impatience. At length he asked her pointedly what was her business. This only led to more palaver.

'Howsomever,' she at last proceeds, 'being, as I was saying, left a widow—it's a sair thing, Mr Jamphler, to be a widow—I had a' to do, and my father having left me, among other things, o' my bairns' part of gear—for the Barwullupton gaed, as ye ken, to my auld brother the laird, that married Miss Jenny Ochiltree o' the Mains; a very creditable connexion, Mr Jamphler, and a genteel woman. She can play on the spinnet, Mr Jamphler. But no to fash you wi' our family divisions: among other things, there was on my bit grund a kill and a mill, situate on the Crokit-burn, and I lent the kill to a neighbour to dry some aits; and, Mr Jamphler—oh what a sight it was to me!—the kill took low, and the mill likewise took wi't, and baith gaed just as ye would say a crackle, and nothing was left but the bare wa's and the steading. Noo, Mr Jamphler, wha's tanswer for the damage? Howsomever, Mr Jamphler, as I can see that it's no an aff-hand case, I'll bid you gild day, and ye'll consider o' again the morn, when I'll come to you afore the lords in the Parliament House.'

The counsellor was now, it may be supposed, in no small tribulation. The lady, however, was not yet done with him. Rising and going to the window, she cried, "'Oh! Mr Jamphler, the coach that brought us here—I wouldna come but in a coach to Mr Jamphler—but it's gone. Oh! Mr Jamphler, as I'm a wee o' a lamiter wi' the rheumaticks, will ye hae the kindness just to rin out for a coach to me? I'll be very muckle obliged to you, Mr Jamphler; it's but a step yonder to whar the coaches are biding on outlook.'

'Mr Jamphler rung the bell, and ordered his servant to fetch instantly a coach.

'But, Mr Jamphler,' resumed Mrs Ogle of Balbogle, 'I hae another favour to ask. Ye maun ken I'm sometimes tormented wi' that devility they call the toothache; are ye aquaint wi' ony doctor than can do me good?' Mr Jamphler immediately mentioned our friend and correspondent, the Odontist. 'Eh!' said Mrs Ogle of Balbogle, 'the famous Dr Scott! But whar does he bide, Mr Jamphler?' The urbane counsellor mentioned his address. 'Ah! but, Mr Jamphler, ye maun write it down, for I hae but a slack memory.' Mr Jamphler did so immediately; but the lady, on looking at the paper, said, 'Na, na, Mr Jamphler, that winna do: I canna read Greek: ye maun git it in broad Scotch: I'm nae of your novel leddies, but Mrs Ogle o' Balbogle.' Mr Jamphler was in consequence obliged to write the address more legibly, and the coach coming to the door, the lady and her daughter

withdrew. Mr Jamphler then joined the company in the drawing-room, and soon after, the young lady, in *propria persona*, with the Odontist's address in her hand, was announced as Mrs Ogle of Balbogle.'

These anecdotes serve to illustrate the circumstances under which little playful impostures may rightly be carried on. No satire being indulged in, the parties being friendly, and disposed to enjoy innocent jokes even at their own expense, no harm can well arise. Where, however, all are not of one humour, or where the jest rubs on a known sore, or for certain will place the subject of it in a false and ridiculous position, or even gall an unlucky over-sensitiveness of nature, the whole procedure must tend to mischief, and therefore is to be unhesitatingly condemned.

### THE CENTRAL SUN.

LECTURES on astronomy have for many years been highly popular with a large portion of the public; in the smaller provincial towns, the arrival of an itinerant lecturer, and the delivery of his 'course of three,' illustrated by an orrery, was an event productive of general satisfaction, and served to enliven one or two of the dreary weeks of winter. Most readers will remember the average amount of information imparted on these occasions: commencing with the sun, the lecturer gave a description of our solar system, taking the planets in their respective order, their bulk, orbital motion, and distance from the central luminary, and, assisted by a magic lantern, finished with representations of the moon's phases, Jupiter's belts, and Saturn's ring. Something was generally added that largely excited the wonder of the auditors, who went away fully persuaded that they had learned the whole scheme and compass of astronomical science—for them it had no more secrets.

It is no longer the same in the present day: with increased knowledge, has grown up, to a certain extent, an increased desire to comprehend it; the old limits have been found far too narrow for an intelligence ever seeking to enlarge its boundaries; and no sooner is a great thing achieved, than it is immediately made a starting point for something still greater. The popular mind is not now satisfied with the aliment it fed on ten or fifteen years ago; it has become in some sense the reflex of the progress of science—wider in its grasp, but more simple, certain, and accurate.

As a consequence of this movement, popular astronomy now embraces something beyond the sun and planets: it has learned something of other systems beyond our own—of double and triple stars, many of them inconceivably remote; of nebulae; and a new planet. But there is one fact, first announced by the elder Herschel, which, although well known to men of science, has been much less frequently brought into general notice than the others, in direct opposition to commonly received opinions. The prevalent idea respecting our sun is, that, with the exception of a movement round its centre of gravity, it occupies a fixed and invariable position in the heavens. Recent researches have, however, verified the assertion, that, in common with the whole universe, it has what is called a 'movement of translation' through space in obedience to some mighty and unknown influence, analogous to that which impels the minor planets and moons in their orbits. And we shall now endeavour to give an outline of the present state of our knowledge respecting this interesting subject.

As we have already stated, the late Sir William Herschel was the first to demonstrate what had for some time been suspected by astronomers—the progressive movement of the sun through space. In the course of his persevering investigations of the heavens, he had at different periods made three surveys of the stars comprised in the catalogue published by Flamsteed, the first astronomer-royal. On each occasion he found that the positions differed greatly from those marked in the catalogue: two stars of the fourth magnitude in the

constellation Hercules, which Flamsteed had observed, were no longer to be seen. The same phenomenon was remarked also in Cancer and Perseus: the stars were either lost, or so far removed, as to be no longer recognisable, while several new ones were visible which had not been previously noticed. Herschel extended his observations to a large number of the stars and constellations, and the result in all cases showed that the most extraordinary changes had taken place since the days of Flamsteed; and in 1783, in one of his communications to the Royal Society, he wrote—'This consideration alone would lead us strongly to suspect that there is not, in strictness of speaking, one fixed star in the heavens; but many other reasons, which I shall presently adduce, will render this so obvious, that there can hardly remain a doubt of the general motion of all the starry systems, and consequently of the solar one among the rest.'

Lalande had thrown out the supposition that 'the sun has a real movement in absolute space;' but Herschel went beyond him—he proved it. As Copernicus, two centuries before, had established that the sun's apparent motion round the heavens was due to the real motion of the earth, so did the English astronomer show that the changes of position of the distant stars was caused not only by their own movement, but chiefly by that of our system. Still pursuing the inquiry, we find him writing in 1805:—'A view of the moons, or secondary planets, round their primary ones, and of these again round the sun, may suggest the idea of an additional motion of the latter round some other unknown centre.' He demonstrated beyond a doubt that the sun, with all its attendant planets, was moving with great velocity towards one of the stars in Hercules. The further investigation of the subject, it has been said, was 'one essentially for modern times;' and the high degree of perfection now exhibited in the construction of instruments, has enabled astronomers to distinguish between apparent and real motion, and to confirm Herschel's bold and original views in every particular. Many anomalies in the movements of the stars were at once explained by the fact of the sun's motion in space. So rapid is this motion, that, according to Bessel, it amounts to 3,336,000 miles in a day. The effects of this amazing velocity are eloquently described by the celebrated Humboldt. He observes:—'The beautiful stars of the Centaur and of the Southern Cross will at some future day be visible in our northern latitudes, whilst other stars (Sirius, and the stars forming the belt of Orion) will no longer appear above the horizon. The place of the north pole will be successively marked by Cephei and Cygni, until after the lapse of twelve thousand years, when Syra will become the brightest of all possible pole stars. These statements serve in some degree to realise in the mind the magnitude of the movements which proceed uninterruptedly in infinitely small divisions of time in the great chronometer of the universe. In every point of the celestial vault we recognise the dominion of progressive movement, as on the surface of the earth, where vegetation is constantly putting forth its leaves and buds, and unfolding its blossoms.'

The improvements in telescopes, that enabled astronomers to penetrate farther into space, gave them at the same time the means of more accurate observation than they had previously possessed. The heavens were 'gauged' in every direction, and carefully mapped out. Among the more interesting phenomena brought to light by these researches were those of double stars, of which about six thousand are now known, chiefly by the labours of the Herschels, father and son, and Struve, a Russian astronomer. The difference in the appearance of stars was shown to depend not on their size, but on their distance. They are, however, always classed according to their magnitudes, ranging from 1 to 22. No. 1 denotes the brightest and nearest stars, and 22 the smallest and most remote: the first six only are visible to the naked eye. The fixed stars were found to be comparatively, and not absolutely, stationary, and to be the centres of

systems similar to our own. The discovery of the planets revolving round these centres yet remains to add another to the great triumphs of astronomical science.

The double stars revolve one around the other, and are supposed to present the simplest or elementary form of stellar motion. Besides these binary systems, there are others—triple, quadruple—gradually increasing in number and complexity. Wherever the observer turns his gaze, he discovers movement, in obedience, as it were, to one universal law of gravitation: wherever stars are clustered, they group themselves in increasing brightness round a definite though unseen point of attraction; and it is not surprising that philosophers should have speculated as to the existence and position of some mighty centre, round which, in the course of countless ages, the whole stellar universe revolves; or, in the words of Schiller, 'amid ceaseless change seek the unchanging pole.'

Various stars have been fixed on from time to time as the centre round which all revolved. Sirius, from its magnitude and brightness, was often supposed to be the occupant of this position; but the observations of later astronomers, Argelander and Bessel, have shown that this star has a sensible movement of its own apparently around some greater body, far remote, and invisible to us; so that Sirius, instead of being the chief of the army of fixed stars, is only one of the subordinate members of a partial system.

So carefully have the heavens been explored of late years, that but few of the greater movements of the stars are unknown to us; and looking at the distribution of these through the realms of space, no point has been found filled by a star of the first magnitude which fulfils the condition we have just indicated. Hitherto, the movements appear to be greater or lesser optically only, and it is one of the objects of modern astronomy to define these movements with exactitude by the parallax. The same reasoning may be applied to the double stars—none of them show the existence of any considerable mass. From all these negative considerations, the conclusion has been come to, that it was useless to look for a central body in our more immediate stellar system.

The fact that, in the partial systems of fixed stars, and especially those of double stars, there is not, generally speaking, a great superiority of mass in one of the bodies—and that, on the contrary, the two masses are almost equal in the greater proportion of them—has necessarily thrown doubt on the existence of such a central body as has frequently been described of an enormously preponderating mass.

If such were the case, we should see the most active movements in the neighbourhood of this mass, as in our own system we see the most rapid revolutions in the planets nearest the sun. By the same analogy, supposing the central mass to be invisible, we should see the stars in some quarters of the heavens moving much more slowly than those situated nearer the central region. We should not find, likewise, any more active movements than in this region, excepting, perhaps, in some of the members of our own system already referred to.

Foremost among those who have directed their attention to this subject is M. Maedler, the Russian astronomer at Dorpat, in Estonia, who is already well known as author of an admirable geographical map of the moon. From a series of observations continued during a period of six years, he has come to the conclusion that the Newtonian law of attraction, which regulates our solar system, exists also in the systems of the fixed stars. It is difficult to convey an idea of the method pursued in working out results involving an acquaintance with the most abstruse details of astronomical science. The pilot of a ship feeling his way along with the lead on a foggy day, might be instanced as a comparative illustration of the process by approximation. After going through the various hypotheses

to which we have referred, M. Maedler treats of the Milky Way as the fundamental plane of our stellar groups. Its general line of direction describes more or less perfectly a great circle, dividing the heavens into two unequal portions: the northern or smaller portion being comparatively devoid of stars, while the southern half, near to which we are situated, is thickly studded. By a series of observations of groups, as well as of individual stars, M. Maedler deduced approximations for the position he was seeking, and, rejecting one after the other, arrived, after persevering exertions, at what he conceived to be the true centre in the group of the Pleiades; which, to use his own words, 'is the pivot round which the fixed stars, as a whole, describe their immense orbits.'

It is generally known that, among the most remarkable of the stellar groups, there is none comparable to the Pleiades for splendour or number of stars. The closeness with which they are placed is not merely optical. They are found in a region rich in stars, and answering well to the other general conditions which we have endeavoured to explain. The perfect concord existing between the determinations of the proper movements of these stars, notwithstanding their minute quantities, is cited as a proof of the correctness of astronomical catalogues, and thereby facilitating the labours of future observers. M. Maedler compares the observations of the most eminent British and continental astronomers on this group and some of the neighbouring stars—taking, first of all, twelve stars situated within 5 degrees of Aleyone, the brightest of the Pleiades; and next, thirty at a distance of from 5 to 10 degrees; and lastly, fifty-seven stars, whose distance is from 10 to 15 degrees. Observations on these stars prove that, with some exception, they all have a positive motion towards the south. The most numerous of the exceptions are in the fifty-seven last mentioned: forty of them having moved but two seconds of a degree in eighty-five years, it is difficult to determine the direction. The fact, however, remains, that of the one hundred and ten stars enumerated within 15 degrees of Aleyone, the movements of sixty of the number are towards the south, and in no case towards the north. It would be idle to contend that such a result is the effect of chance: it has been further proved by observations on one hundred and seventy-two stars of Bradley's catalogue; and the direction to the south, though in many instances feeble, is not the less certain.

'Although,' continues M. Maedler, 'it results, from what precedes, that the region of the heaven which I have chosen satisfies the conditions indicated, it is not less necessary to submit it to every possible proof. Many trials with different combinations have convinced me that no other point could be found to answer so well as the one I have adopted. I can state, therefore, as the result of my researches, that the group of the Pleiades is the central group of the entire system of fixed stars extending to the exterior limits determined by the Milky Way; and that Aleyone is the star of this group which appears the most probably to be the true Central Sun.' Light is five hundred and thirty-seven years in travelling to us from this Central Sun, whose mass is 117,400,000 times larger than that of our own luminary. The revolution of the latter round Aleyone requires a period of 18,200,000 years; and supposing the movement to continue the same as at present, the sun will reach the ascending node of its orbit in the year 154,500 of our era. The calculations are not given as positively determined, but as the nearest approximation hitherto obtained.

The mind is bewildered in the contemplation of such tremendous phenomena, of whose workings only the dimmest perception can be realised; sufficient, however, to impress us with the infinite majesty of Nature. M. Maedler, in concluding his observations, expresses the hope that he has pursued an object favourable to the progress of science, one that may possess such interest for other scientific men, as to lead them to push

the inquiry still further, to investigate still more successfully the system of the universe. In whatever way his appeal may be answered, he has not the less rendered a new and signal service to science, and opened a wider field of astronomical research.

## THE DAUGHTER OF STANISLAUS.

A STORY.

It was the night of the 15th of February, and intensely cold, and notwithstanding the night and the cold, a young man, rather thinly clad, was lurking about the castle of Weissemburg, a small town in Alsatia, some leagues from Strasburg. After having made two or three circuits about the castle, he stopped before a Gothic window, through the curtains of which light was visible.

He was evidently waiting for some one, and soon he was relieved from his solitude by the approach of a person wrapped in a heavy cloak.

'I am glad you are punctual, Mikael,' said the newcomer; 'now for the work in hand. In that castle, perhaps in that room before us, is Stanislaus, late king of Poland. All I desire is, that you contrive to get him to use this snuff-box. It contains good Spanish snuff, an article of which he is fond. Here also is a basket of porcelain. You are to sell the whole. Maria Lesczinska, the daughter of Stanislaus, will buy it all from you.'

'All very good, my lord,' replied Mikael; 'but should I not have a little payment in hand to excite my mercantile diligence? Look at my miserable clothing, which is even at this moment insufficient to keep out the cold; and my mother, too, she is in abject poverty—she is both cold and hungry.'

'So long as Stanislaus lives, both you and she must be cold and hungry,' was the only answer his employer deigned to give him as he strode away.

Mikael, it may be imagined, was on no good errand. Lingered about the castle till pretty well on in the morning, he presented himself at the gate, which opened to let out a servant, going upon some commission for the household. He approached and said, 'Have compassion on me, sir, and procure me an audience of the Princess Maria.'

'Another beggar coming to ask her charity!' said the domestic abruptly; 'and he is early enough.'

'Ah, sir,' said the youth, 'I am a child of Poland; banished like your master, but still more unhappy than he, inasmuch as I am alone in the world.'

'You are coming, then, as his countryman to ask alms of him?' interrupted the valet.

Mikael replied humbly, 'I am come to sell to the princess all that remains of former wealth—some china.'

'Oh, that is quite a different matter,' answered the servant. 'Stay there—I will let the princess know; and closing the gate after him, he went back into the house.'

The poor youth waited for a long time before the door opened. The day was far advanced, and the rays of the sun had succeeded in making their way through the gray clouds of a wintry sky, when a gentle voice roused him from the stupor into which the cold was fast throwing him, saying, 'I am told you have some beautiful porcelain for sale?'

At a glance, Mikael perceived that the speaker was a young girl, with a countenance rather pleasing than pretty: she was accompanied by a middle-aged lady, who did not seem to be in the best of humours. It may be that the early rising was not very agreeable to her, or else the cold of the morning, from which the furs in which they were both closely wrapped could not altogether protect them.

'Ah, princess,' said Mikael, giving a most piteous tone to his voice, while his foreign accent lent some probability to his words, 'I am a poor child of Poland,

whose father perished in battle in the service of King Stanislaus. Come to France with my mother, who was of a good family, we have been obliged to sell for our subsistence, little by little, all that remained to us of past opulence; now, only this porcelain is left to us.'

'Poor boy! Let us see your china,' said the princess kindly. 'But first come in, it is so dreadfully cold here.'

'What are you thinking of, princess,' whispered the old lady to Maria, 'to introduce a stranger into the castle?'

'But this is a Pole, Mockzinska,' observed the princess.

'What proof have you that he is?' replied Mockzinska. 'I am perhaps wrong, dear princess, but your noble father's life has so often been threatened, that it has rendered me suspicious; besides, this man has a most forbidding countenance, and a downcast look, which, in spite of myself, repels me.'

'I confess, Mockzinska, that, like you, I am obliged to struggle against the prejudice produced by the expression of his countenance,' said Maria, still in a whisper, and looking at the pretended Pole, who at this moment betrayed a marked uneasiness. 'But, after all, the poor boy did not make himself. Is it his fault that he is ugly, and ought we to visit it upon his head? However, there is no harm in being cautious, so we may as well look at the china outside.' Then approaching Mikael, she added, raising her voice, 'Let us see your porcelain, my friend.' The face of Mikael brightened at this demand, and he hastened to open his basket.

'Here,' said he, drawing out one by one the articles, which he presented alternately to the princess and her governess, 'is a china vase, with tescups of a set which a sea-captain, a wealthy relative of ours, gave to my mother the day of her marriage with my father. Nothing but sore distress could make us part with so precious a souvenir. But look here! Oh, this article, though only in Dresden china, is dearer to me than all! It was the snuff-box which my father had in daily use. I have heard it said that King Stanislaus is particularly fond of Spanish snuff; indeed I could not be a Pole and be ignorant of it, for all the Poles are so warmly attached to their former king, your noble father, and the father of us all, if I may dare call him so, that we know his tastes, his habits, his likings and dislikings, just as we do those of our natural parents; and knowing this, yesterday I spent the little I possessed in buying from an old Spaniard what remained to him of this snuff. I have filled the box with it, and I think, princess, that you will have much pleasure in presenting your royal father with what he likes so much.'

'Is it scented?' inquired Maria.

'I do not offer your highness a specimen,' replied the false merchant, opening the box, but holding it at a distance from the ladies, 'because it is very powerful—very powerful; it would get into your head, particularly into that of a young person. It requires the solid brain of a man in the prime of life to bear a pinch.'

'How much is the box and the snuff?' demanded the princess.

'Will not your highness take all?' inquired the merchant.

'Yes. How much are they altogether?' said the princess with a complacent look into the interior of the basket.

'Going to buy all! How can you think of it, dear princess?' interrupted the governess. 'Did you not yesterday give to two poor children, who were crying with cold, all the money you had except that beautiful louis-d'or with the effigy of the young king of France, Louis XV., and which you prize so much, that you would buy nothing this week in order not to spend it?'

'But, dear Mockzinska,' said the princess with the coaxing look that so well became her almost infantine youthfulness of expression, 'only think what a delight to give my father some of that Spanish snuff, which he

is so fond of! And I think this porcelain so pretty, that if the young man will let me have the whole for my louis—'

'That is exactly what Monsieur Levi, a toy-merchant, offered me yesterday morning,' said the young Mikael, believing, by the help of this lie, to make the princess more eager to buy.

'And you refused it?' said the princess.

'Yes, madame; but I will not refuse you,' replied Mikael; 'for since I may choose, I would much rather have you for a customer. So here is my basket.'

'No, keep it,' replied the princess, 'while I go for the money.'

The princess and her governess now re-entered the castle, leaving the pretended Pole waiting for them. He was sauntering about the gate, when suddenly his look became fixed, and his countenance assumed a strange expression; and though the bargain had been concluded, and he on the point of receiving his money, he snatched up his basket and disappeared at full speed.

The person who had thus caused his alarm was a poor beggar woman, well known in all Weissenburg, not less for her honesty than her poverty.

The princess soon returned with her beautiful louis-d'or, and was gazing upon it as it sparkled upon her white glove, as we gaze on a beloved object we are to see no more, when, raising her eyes to address the merchant, she found that both merchant and porcelain had vanished.

She looked around in surprise, but perceiving only the old beggar woman, she called her. 'My good mother,' said she, 'do you know where a lad who was selling porcelain is gone—he was here not a moment ago?'

'I have seen no one,' replied the poor woman in a tone so expressive of extreme weakness, that the princess felt moved to the bottom of her heart.

'What is the matter with you, my good woman?' said she kindly.

'Cold and hunger,' replied the beggar.

'Dear Mockzinska,' said the princess, turning to her governess, 'go, I beg of you, and desire something to be brought here for this poor woman.'

'I am indeed very poor, and much to be pitied,' replied the beggar, whilst Mockzinska went away; 'but nevertheless I should not complain, madame, if I suffered alone.'

'You have children, then?' demanded Maria.

'Two, madame—a son and daughter. My son!—may God give him grace to walk in the right way! As to my daughter, she is dying.'

'Of what?' demanded the princess, her heart quite touched.

'Of want, madame. That is the sickness which kills most surely, and kills in the most cruel manner—slowly and hopelessly.'

'How shocking!' exclaimed the princess, clasping her hands. 'And how old is she?'

'The same age as our young king, Louis XV., madame,' replied the beggar. 'She was born on the same day as he, the 15th of February 1710. She was ten years old to-day.'

'And can anything be done for her, my good woman?' replied the princess. 'Perhaps good air and wholesome food?'

'Good air!—we live in a cellar. Wholesome food!—all we have to eat is the offal of the streets! and we have not even sufficient covering for her poor little body, which is quite blue with the cold.'

'Here—oh here, my good mother,' said the princess; and forgetting the porcelain, forgetting the romantic interest she attached to the louis-d'or, she put it into the hand of the old beggar. 'Here, this is all I have. Oh, poor creature, how you must suffer at seeing your daughter dying before your eyes!'

'Am I to have all this?' demanded the beggar, whom the sight of the gold now in her hand seemed to overwhelm with astonishment—'all this!'

'Alas! it is very little for so much wretchedness,' said the princess.

'Oh, my good princess!' exclaimed the beggar with a burst of gratitude, 'may God bless you—and he will bless you! You deserve to be queen of France!'

'Where do you live?' inquired the princess.

'At No. 3 of the old street of the Arcade,' said the poor woman.

At this moment Mockzinska returned, followed by a servant carrying something to eat, which he gave to the beggar.

'Will you permit me not to eat it myself?' demanded she.

'Just as you please. Take it where you like, and you may expect to see me to-day.'

The old woman did not need a second bidding, but went away, calling down the blessings of Heaven on the compassionate princess.

'Here is the porcelain, your highness,' said the voice of the pretended pedlar, who now reappeared.

'My good friend, I advise you to carry them to M. Levi. I have just disposed of my last louis-d'or,' said the princess.

So fierce an expression overspread the features of Mikael, that the princess recoiled almost in terror; but, in the unsuspicious goodness of her nature, she accounted for it by the thought that the destitution he had told her of must have rendered the disappointment a severe one; and she hastened to add, 'If you do not sell them to M. Levi, return to-morrow, and I will see what I can do.'

'I will return to-morrow!' said Mikael in a tone which almost sounded like a threat.

Mikael, as it may be supposed, carried the porcelain to no toy-merchant; so that the next day, at the appointed hour, he appeared at the castle, the asylum granted to the unfortunate king of Poland by the regent of France. This time, instead of the princess, he saw only a valet, who spoke gruffly to him, and did not waste much pains in softening his message.

'The princess neither can nor will buy your porcelain: so be off with yourself.'

'It is as bad for you as for me; for I intended to have shared the profits with you,' replied Mikael.

'On second thoughts, you may come back to-morrow,' said the valet, seduced by this unexpected offer. 'The princess has no money to-day, but to-morrow she will have some; for the Princess Palatine, her grandmother, fills her purse whenever she knows it is empty.'

The next day Mikael was again punctual at the same place. This time the princess had gone out, and was not to return till dinner-time. Mikael took up his basket, and again went away; but as he was gloomily crossing a street, which led out of the town, a neighbour accosted him.

'Mikael, how comes it that you have not been near your mother for the last three days?'

'I had something better to do,' answered Mikael gruffly.

'Oh, is that the way with you?' replied the neighbour. 'Well, if you wish to know what has been going on at home, go and see. Strange things. Enough; that is all I have to say to you.'

Though Mikael now eagerly called on him to explain himself, his neighbour went off whistling, and without seeming to hear him. These words: 'Strange things have been going on at home,' went to the heart of the youth. He thought it was some new misery; for, like all persons brought up in the school of misfortune, he anticipated nothing else. 'Was his mother ill? or had his sister sunk under the malady which had so long undermined her health?' And with every thought fixed upon them both—for the heart of Mikael was not yet so wholly corrupt as to be destitute of natural affection—he took the way to the city, and hastened to the abode of his mother.

It was the underground storey of a house, built in so

narrow a street, that the cheerful sunbeams could never find admission. As he set foot on the threshold of the house, a child playing near called out—'Mikael, your mother has removed. She lives now in the street opening upon the fields, down there, near the garden. Oh, it is so nice! Run, man, and see it!'

Astounded by this intelligence, which he could hardly understand, Mikael did not make up his mind to repair to the place pointed out to him by the child till perfectly assured that his mother no longer inhabited her old residence; and even then, he hesitated as he approached it, hardly believing that it was really the dwelling of his poor mother. Notwithstanding the snow which covered the ground, and hung from the shrubs like so many white and crystal tear-drops, the good order of the garden, and the beauty of the fruit-trees, were easily discernible. Then the house, small as it was, had an air of neatness and simplicity, the best substitute for elegance, and nearly as attractive. Suddenly he heard himself called.

'Well, Mikael, what are you doing there?' and a young child, still pale, but with eyes sparkling with happiness, appeared at the door.

It was his sister Louisa, who was so ill only three days ago, that she had to be supported while getting a drink, and now she was walking alone and unaided.

'Louisa!' exclaimed he, darting towards her, 'what miracle is this?'

'A miracle, indeed, dear Mikael,' replied the child; 'an angel has visited us. Wont you come in?' added she, drawing her brother into one division of the house, which served as a kitchen, and making him sit down by a good fire, on which a pot was boiling. 'Look, all this is ours—mamma's, and yours, and mine. All this has been given us by a young lady, who wept on seeing our old house, and said, "I could not have believed it possible that there was such wretchedness in the world." Yesterday she brought us here in a fine carriage, and we were expecting her again to-day, as she promised to come.'

'Oh, is that you, my son?' said an old woman, coming out of a neighbouring apartment. 'Louisa has told you all our happiness. But what have you there?' added she, pointing to the basket, which Mikael continued to hold in his hand.

'It is china, which has been given to me to sell,' replied Mikael.

'And that is what has kept you these three days from your mother, my son?' said she in that tone of tender reproach which, from the lips of a parent, is almost a caress.

Before Mikael had time to invent a falsehood, as probably he would have done, a carriage stopped at the door of the house, from which alighted a young girl, who ran across the garden with a step so light, that it scarcely left its trace upon the snow, and entering the kitchen, darted towards the fire. 'Oh, how cold it is!' said she. She was followed by an old lady, who also approached the fire, but without speaking. On the appearance of these two ladies, Mikael made a movement as if to run away; but the youngest having perceived him, prevented him by saying, 'Well, my little porcelain merchant, have you concluded your bargain with M. Levi?'

'No, madame,' replied he, stammering.

'What! princess, you know my son?' inquired the poor woman.

'What! this child of Poland is your son?' demanded in her turn the princess. Then seeing the confusion of the son, and the anger of the mother, the kind heart of the princess came to the aid of both.

'I guess it all, Mother Jalsen,' added she. 'You must forgive him, as I do. Nothing can excuse falsehood; but it may be some palliation of his, that he had recourse to it to get bread for you; and I suppose his story about his porcelain and M. Levi was like the rest. Well, I trust it may be a lesson to him; for if he had told me the truth, and had not led me to think that he had so cer-

tain a sale for them that my not buying them did him no injury—if he had but said to me, "My mother is dying of hunger, and my sister of disease," I should have given my louis-d'or to him as well as to you, Mother Jalsou; but I will say no more. So, then, your porcelain is not sold?" added Maria, observing the basket.

"Alas! no, madame," said Mikael.

"My son!—my son!" cried Mother Jalsou sorrowfully; "for some time you have not been steady; you keep bad company; you no longer work at the currier's with whom I placed you. What are you doing? where do you go to? and where did you get that porcelain, which I never saw before?"

"From a friend—from a real Pole," said Mikael, with his eyes cast down; in his shame and embarrassment trying to avoid every eye.

"Then as your friend's position remains unaltered, he is still in want: is it not so?" demanded the princess.

"Yes, yes!" said Mikael.

"Fortunately I am just now rich enough to make many happy," said Maria gaily. "The Princess Palatine, my grandmother, having heard yesterday from the gossiping of my people, and a little also, I believe, from that of dear Mockzinska," added Maria, smiling archly at her governess, "how it fared with my poor purse, which I empty so often, has been good enough to fill it; so I can buy the porcelain of your Polish friend. At all events, I must have the snuff-box for my father," continued the princess; and going to the basket, and uncovering it, she took out, one by one, the articles, and laid them on the table. "I will give the bowl to the Princess Palatine, the six cups to my dear mother—"

"And what for yourself?" demanded Mockzinska.

"Oh, as to me, I shall be quite content if my father will give me a pinch of his good Spanish snuff."

As she uttered these words, Maria had taken the snuff-box, opened it, and was putting it to her nose, when Mikael, who for some minutes had been uneasily watching every motion of the princess, darted towards her, and pale, palpitating, and as if beside himself, snatched it from her hands, and threw it into the fire. Then, as if terrified at what he had done, remained standing breathless and motionless.

"What can be the meaning of this?" cried in different tones each spectator of the scene. The princess alone said nothing. Indignant, but proudly calm, she sought to read, in his forehead and eye, the secret which made that scowling brow droop before her gaze.

"Speak, young man," said Mockzinska to Mikael; "what motive that we do not understand has led you to fail in respect to the daughter of the most unfortunate, as well as of the most virtuous of monarchs?"

"Are you mad, my son?" said the mother in a tone of deep sorrow.

"Brother," murmured Louisa, "it is the Princess Maria—the angel who cured me."

"Speak, Mikael; I command you!" said Maria. There was such an energy of authority in the tone of the young girl, that Mikael fell on his knees, hid his face in his hands, and bursting into tears, cried, "I am a wretch, a monster; I deserve death in all its torture. Whilst she was saving my mother, and curing my sister—whilst she was giving us health, joy, and happiness—I—I was carrying to her death and desolation!"

"Wretched boy! that snuff was poisoned, and you intended it for my father, and fixed upon my hands to offer it to him?" cried Maria, and she would have fallen, had not Mockzinska caught her in her arms.

"Oh! it cannot be—it cannot be!" exclaimed the poor mother in accents of despair.

"Answer, Mikael," said Maria, regaining a little composure.

"It is too true!" said Mikael, still quailing under the fixed look of the princess.

"It is true!" repeated the princess, clasping her hands—"it is true you wished to kill my father! But who has incited you? Say—has this man, so just, unknowingly committed any act of injustice towards you? Has this

man, so noble, trampled upon you, because you are weak? Has this monarch, so unfortunate, visited upon you his misfortunes? Speak—speak, sir! How did my father ever wrong you?"

"Never, madame. But—oh! I ask not pity for myself—but for the sake of my mother, my young sister, hear me!" cried Mikael, throwing himself at the feet of Maria. "The man who tempted me to do this dreadful deed, drove me almost mad by perpetually saying, "Whilst Stanislaus lives, your mother, your sister, and yourself will suffer cold and hunger."

"Then who were these men?" demanded Maria, restraining her indignation in order to learn and defeat the plots of her father's enemies.

"I am quite ignorant of their names, their rank, or their number," replied Mikael; "but to-morrow I am to meet him who, for the last eight days, has been my evil genius, under the walls of the castle, outside the Gothic window of your royal father's room. You now know all I know myself, princess. As to asking your pardon, it is useless; my doom is fixed, my life is forfeited, sold either way."

"Fear not; I take you under my protection; no harm shall happen you," said the princess. "But I must return to the castle. My father, my good father, so noble, so good, so virtuous! Oh, may a gracious Providence bestow on you the reward of your virtues!"

"He has already bestowed it on him, in giving you to him, dear princess," said Mother Jalsou weeping. "Have you not already been his preserver by the very act of loading us with benefits?"

"I have indeed been rewarded for what I have been able to do for you," said the princess, wiping her beautiful eyes, still wet with tears. "Oh let us hasten back to the castle, Mockzinska; after the danger my father has been in, I long as much to see him as if we had been parted for years."

Thus the life of Stanislaus was once more saved; I say once more, because this was the third plot to assassinate him. The first attempt was by a barber, who, having undertaken to kill him, ran away, leaving the king with the napkin round his neck, and his face covered with lather; the second was defeated by a plot still more artfully contrived; and this third and last was the forerunner of an event overwhelming the family of Stanislaus with joy.

The treaty of marriage between Louis XV. and the infant of Spain having been broken off, the ministers of the boy-king sought everywhere for the princess most likely to render Louis happy; and after some consideration, they decided on Maria Leszczinska.

Stanislaus still inherited Weissenburg, when proposals for her hand were made to him through the Cardinal de Rohan, bishop of Strasburg. He repaired immediately to the chamber of his wife, who was employed at needlework.

"Let us kneel down and thank God," said he as he entered.

"Father!" exclaimed Maria, "you are reinstated on the throne of Poland?"

"Oh, my daughter!" replied the dethroned king, "Heaven has been much more propitious to us—for you are queen of France!"

The nuptials were celebrated at Fontainebleau on the 5th of September 1725.

She had scarcely been six months on the throne, when she wrote thus to her father:—"I hope, my dear papa, that you will not keep me waiting longer for what you promised. Mark out clearly all my duties for me: tell me all my faults. You know me better than I know myself. Be my guiding angel. I am indeed sure that by following you I shall never go astray; but I cannot answer for what I may do if I depend only upon my own poor understanding. It seems as if everybody was pleased with me. I do not judge by what is spoken, for that is but flattery; but it seems as if every face was lit up with joy at my approach, and that gives me pleasure. Praise be to our gracious God for all! My dear

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papa, I am sure you will pray to Him for the king and me.

Her father hastened to send her the advice she had solicited, and which was dictated by the most rational tenderness and the most enlightened wisdom; and by conforming to it, she acquired amongst her French people the title of the 'Good Queen.' It is pleasing to add that Stanislaus, on abdicating his claim to the throne of Poland in 1736, obtained the duchies of Lorraine and Bar, where, till his death, he reigned in the affections of the people as 'Stanislaus the Beneficent.'

## EDUCATION OF IDIOTS AT THE BICÊTRE.

### THIRD ARTICLE.

AFTER the school exercise, described in a former article,\* the boys were desired to disperse, and proceed to their various occupations. They broke up in a manner very similar to boys in an ordinary school; some capering off with all the glee of liberty, others sauntering out singly or in company with their fellows, and a few voluntarily remaining in the school-room. I was conducted by M. Vallée into an adjoining apartment, where were arranged against the wall a variety of maps, and a number of coloured engravings, calculated to afford both amusement and instruction. During the few minutes we remained in this room, several of the idiots came romping and scampering together into it, showing much more spirit, and a greater capacity for playful enjoyment, than I could have supposed them capable of. Three or four of them immediately sprang on a large rocking-horse, which stood in the centre of the room, and began to force it backwards and forwards with no small amount of pleasure to themselves, as shown by their repeated joyous shouts and boisterous laughter. I was told that they entered with equal zest into the various games practised every evening, such as leap-frog, skipping-rope, marbles, ball, &c.

As we stood in this anteroom, I could observe the troop of little fellows wending their way to the scene of their different occupations. After watching them a little while, we left the school-room, and proceeded to follow them, with a view of witnessing their proficiency in the various handicrafts in which they had been instructed.

On passing into the open air, I became fully sensible of the crowd of novel impressions which had in so short a space of time been made upon me, and I felt tempted to pause and look back on the spot where so many new ideas had been received, and with which I now associated a strong feeling of interest.

In taking a rapid review of what had been already demonstrated before me, I endeavoured to systematise and fix in my own mind the principles which had been employed in producing such happy results. It became evident that the various senses are, first of all, stimulated and brought into activity, and through their medium a certain amount of mental power generated. The pupils are next made acquainted, as far as it is possible, with natural objects, and such more especially as come within the range of their ordinary observation. By these familiar lessons in the simplest elements of knowledge, instruction is conveyed in a form well suited to their feeble comprehension; and the method of imparting it being both natural and easy, its attainment is rendered attractive and interesting. Some acquaintance with the nature and properties of objects having been communicated, attempts are next made to impart instruction in the higher branches of knowledge. This is accomplished by means of various mental exercises, so ordered, that the pupil is led gradually, and almost imperceptibly, from the simplest to the higher departments of education. Then easy gradations in the successive lessons appear to have the effect not only of communicating information in an admirable manner,

but also of preventing any sensations of irksomeness or weariness from arising in the minds of the pupils. It is not difficult to imagine the delight which many of these youths experience at the time the first rays of intelligence are engendered within them. Having lived several years in a senseless, inactive condition, it is easy to conceive that the change from this state of vacuity to an existence conscious and intelligent, must be accompanied with feelings of peculiar pleasure and novelty.

In the whole of these exercises, it was evident that a variety of influences were brought into play for the purpose of arousing and keeping in a state of activity the attention of the pupils. Such, for instance, as the concerted and simultaneous movements of the whole pupils; instruction conveyed in the collective and individual mode; and again not only imparted, but elicited by interrogation. Each lesson was illustrated in a manner well suited to their feeble comprehension; and by making these illustrations as pleasing as possible, as well as by interspersing them judiciously, the liability to lapse into a state of vacuity was prevented, at the same time that the feeble powers of attention were not overstrained.

It was pleasing to observe that, in conducting this course of training, the principle of fear seemed in no respect to form a part of the system. There was no appearance of coercion, harshness, or even exaction. The pupils appeared to be encouraged, assisted, and, by mild and persuasive means, to be led gently onward in the path of knowledge by their excellent conductor; who, endowed with a courteous spirit, kind disposition, much method, address, and competent skill, seemed admirably adapted to make their lessons attractive, by blending instruction with sportive influences. The affectionate regard in which the pupils evidently held their teacher spoke favourably not only of his personal good qualities, but also of the excellence of the system. Indeed the essential feature throughout the whole economy seemed to consist of a loving interest and regard for each other, both on the part of tutor and pupils.

The first workroom we entered was that of the carpenters. There were in it fifteen idiots, superintended by two journeymen, who both instructed and encouraged them by working with spirit and activity. Although a short time only had elapsed since we quitted the school-room, yet some of the youths were already employed, others were looking up their tools or adjusting their aprons preparatory to beginning their work. Near the door stood one, who, when I first saw him (early in the day, before any of the exercises had been undertaken), struck me as a most deplorable hopeless object, and I accordingly singled him out for especial observation. In the school-room he had manifested considerable progress in writing, drawing mathematical figures, and other exercises. As I looked towards him, he made evident though very awkward and uncouth signs of recognition, then approached the place where I was standing, and presented to my notice a small ornamental clasp, with which he was about to attach a portion of his working-dress when I entered the room. After looking for a short time at this little ornament, which he seemed to admire and treasure, I returned it to him, when he at once proceeded to adjust his working costume, and fix it with his little clasp. He then began his work by taking up a piece of wood which it was his business to plane. After looking at it a moment or two, he placed it in a vice, screwed it firmly, and commenced turning off the shavings in a workmanlike manner. As if conscious of his merit, he every now and then paused, looked up, and seemed pleased with his own proficiency, and encouraged by the approval awarded to him by his superiors.

This youth is sixteen years of age, and has been in the Bicêtre rather more than three years. When first admitted, he manifested all the characteristics of an inferior animal. His appetite was voracious, and he would devour the most disgusting things. He exhibited,

\* Journal, No. 161.

indeed, some traces of a love of approbation, together with signs of an instinctive gaiety, born, as it were, within, and not created by surrounding objects; but he had all the sensuality of a brute, and a vicious propensity to tear and destroy whatever came within his reach. He was, moreover, passionate in the extreme, attacking and biting every one who offered the least opposition to his inordinate and disgusting propensities. Among these was a very singular one—namely, a strong impulse to poke out the eyes of all who came within his reach. He also showed a peculiar desire to strike any sonorous substance, so as to produce a distinct sound. The voluntary power over his muscles was very imperfect, and he could neither walk nor run properly; he would, however, sometimes spring forward like a wild animal, and at other times he would suddenly start off from his companions, making at the same time a shrill unmeaning cry.

This being, who in 1843 had been in so strange and apparently hopeless a condition, could now read, write, sing, and calculate. I had already noticed in him several manifestations of attachment, and other moral qualities. I now saw him happily engaged, making good use of implements with which, if placed in his hands a few years ago, he would doubtless have inflicted serious injury.

On looking around the room, nearly all the youths were seen to be engaged in sawing, planing, filing, and joining together pieces of wood. The busy scene presented was equally interesting, whether viewed as a whole, or whether the attention was directed to a single pupil. I was struck with the apparent steadiness of hand with which the various tools were grasped and used, as well as with the judgment which was evidently exercised during the performance of the work. I was the more struck with this when I singled out one from the number, and closely observed him to place his piece of timber in the vice, screw it down, take up his plane, and use it for a while, then remove and examine his work in hand; and finding he had not reduced it sufficiently, return it to the vice again, and proceed as before. Selecting another pupil for individual observation, he was seen busily engaged with a small piece of hardwood, forming it, by means of a file, into a sort of moulding of a complicated figure, consisting of curved and straight surfaces, the boundaries of which had been previously marked on it in dark lines.

The order, exactness, and workmanlike manner in which these operations were carried on, was both surprising and gratifying. Before leaving the room, I paused to make a general and accurate examination of the proceedings of these little fellows, with whom I had already formed a sort of acquaintanceship in the school-room. I observed that those who, when handling a slight rule and piece of chalk, seemed to have only a very imperfect control over the arm and hand, were enabled, when engaged in operations requiring greater muscular power in grasping and overcoming resisting objects, to exercise a steadiness and precision which could scarcely have been expected. This circumstance, though at first sight an apparent anomaly, will yet be found, if duly considered, in accordance with certain conditions of the muscular organisation which are known to attend some morbid states of the nervous system, the elucidation of which, however, would at the present moment lead us too far away from the immediate and practical object to which we desire to confine the attention of our readers. Having made this slight digression, I take leave to pause, for the purpose of introducing a passing reflection concerning the instructions which had been given to the idiots in mathematical drawing. At the time that I observed them describing, in a masterly manner, complex figures with chalk, compass, and rule, I was inclined to entertain the idea that such exercises were introduced to show the extent to which an idiot could be educated. I was somewhat fearful they might be looked upon as evidences of what could be done, rather than what ought to be attempted,

and that they bore a character of display and effect, more than one of true utility. These hasty and unjust suspicions received a salutary check as soon as I had been a short time in the midst of this little band of carpenters; and before I left the room, they were not only entirely removed, but I had become impressed with the importance of such preparatory exercises, as a means of giving to these defective creatures a capacity to enter on various trades, by making them capable of appreciating the relation of lines to one another, and the various distinctions between obtuse, acute, and right angles.

After dwelling some time in the carpenters' shop, I was conducted to the next room, where an equally busy and gratifying spectacle was presented. In the apartment we had now entered were no less than twelve idiots, who had been instructed in the art of shoemaking. They were superintended by one foreman, who cut out and fixed the work for them. Each little fellow was seated at a separate stall, and beside him were laid the various implements required in his trade. The whole of the boys were working away very busily, boring with the awl, stitching, hammering, and smoothing down in a remarkably brisk and workmanlike manner.

If the scene in the adjoining room afforded me much pleasure, the sight of the proceedings in this was calculated to heighten such feelings in no small degree. Conscious, from experience, of the difficulty which exists in instructing persons of feeble understanding in an art so complicated as that of shoemaking, I exulted at the spectacle presented, and regarded it as a triumph, and conclusive demonstration of the excellence of the system pursued in training these poor idiots. Step by step I had enjoyed the opportunity of witnessing the means adopted to rescue and elevate these forsaken members of the human family, and I now saw them happy and usefully engaged in the successful execution of work requiring the command of an ordinary share of mental endowment. Although familiar with the internal economy of many of our excellent institutions at home, and no stranger to the condition of several equally excellent in various parts of the continent, yet I confess I never experienced, whilst visiting them, a glow of satisfaction and delight at all to be compared with that which was caused by the sight presented in this little workshop.

Among the workers in this room was the poor decrepit fellow whose condition had previously attracted my especial attention. He was engaged in making list slippers, several pairs of which lay near him. The regularity and steadiness with which he laid the edgings of cloth on his last showed that considerable nicety, comprehension, and capability had been imparted to this apparently hopeless object. He proceeded with his work, as I stood by him, fixing each successive layer by means of a small nail, which he gently struck with his hammer; from time to time he would look up inquiringly, then go on again, as if satisfied that his work met the approbation of the bystanders. It was not without some difficulty I could abstract my attention from this attractive spectacle; and when I retired towards the door, still regarding these poor fellows with interest, one of them rose from his seat, approached, and wished me "Good-day." As I walked away from the workshop, dwelling on the scene I had just witnessed, and of this act of courtesy when leaving it, I felt in the humour to indulge my fancy by thinking of the many sources of pleasure and enjoyment in store for these, the most abject and neglected of our fellow-creatures.

The remainder of the youths—those who are not instructed in any handicraft—are employed in agricultural operations on the farm of St Ann, which lies a short distance from the Bicêtre, and which was purchased a little while ago for the purpose of affording to the insane inmates the opportunity of engaging in this very suitable occupation. Most of the pupils had already proceeded to the farm when I came away from the workshops; I had, however, the opportunity of observing the last detachment prepare for work, by collecting their spades in the implement-room, and proceeding in an orderly

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manner under the care and direction of a farm-labourer. The system adopted in this department is marked by that discretion which is so signally conspicuous in every other arrangement. A number of husbandmen are engaged to instruct, superintend, and work with the boys; each man having a certain number placed under his charge. He is provided with a list of their names, and before setting out, he calls over the roll, each pupil answering to his name, and stepping forward at the same time with his spade in his hand. Before setting out, they, at the word of command, arrange themselves in rank and file, shoulder their long, small spades, and march away in military order. On these minor arrangements depends no doubt much of the excellence of the system, both in preserving order, keeping alive attention, and the prevention of the waywardness peculiar to idiots.

I have already spoken of the improved expression which was observed to spread over the countenance at the time the feeble mental faculties were called into action by means of the exercises in the school-room. In the workshops a similar agreeable change might be noticed during the time the youths were employed, when the features had in a great measure lost their wonted vacuity, and assumed an appearance of intelligence and comprehension probably in a higher degree than that observed in the school-room.

Having now completed the description of my first visit to the Bicêtre, I think it right to say, that as no notice had been given of my intention to inspect the institution, I have every reason to believe that what I witnessed was nothing more than the ordinary daily routine.

#### INGOLDSBY AND HIS LEGENDS.

MUCH more attention than usually falls to the lot of magazine articles was arrested by a series of comic poems called 'The Ingoldsby Legends,' which appeared a few years ago in Bentley's Miscellany. Mirth-raising in their narrative effect, they were marked by a singular aptness on the part of the author for the adroit use of the cant language of the day, and the management of out-of-the-way metres and rhymes. Some other features there were, indicating a genius of no common stamp; one disrespecful, it might be said, to many of the common proprieties of literature and the world, but which more than made up for everything by such an embrace of drollery, as perhaps is not to be obtained upon other terms, and is almost worth having upon any. In time, it became known that the Thomas Ingoldsby set forward as the author of these legends, was no other than the Rev. R. H. Barham, one of the clergy of St Paul's Cathedral; a man of the most perfect respectability in his ordinary character, at the same time that, from his cheerful and amiable dispositions, he was the delight of his family and friends. A long life was not vouchsafed to this estimable person; he died in June 1845, at the age of fifty-seven: and his son has now published an ample memoir of his life, prefacing a third collected series of his 'Legends.'

The personal history of Mr Barham embraces little more than his clerical education, and his various translations from parish to parish. It is agreeable, however, to learn respecting a person of such gaiety of nature, that he was a discreet and conscientious pastor, always in the best esteem both with his superiors and his flock. He had a strong turn for antiquities and old literature, as appears pretty plainly in his poems. He was also a man of sincere but modest piety; he had had severe trials, and he bore them well. We have

much pleasure in recalling a meeting we had with him some years before he was known as an author. We encountered each other amidst one of the miscellanies of company which used to gather at the board of the late Owen Rees the bookseller. Probably finding some common ground in antiquarian subjects, we advanced so far in acquaintance, that Mr Barham offered very kindly to conduct us next morning to some of the more recherché parts of the neighbouring cathedral. A favour of so unusual a kind in the busy life of London, had the effect of stamping the image of the man upon our memory, and we now recall it with pleasure. He was of middle size, somewhat thick, with a round good-humoured face, but not the air of an intellectual man. We remember setting down the head as non-indicative of literary talent; yet it now appears to us, on reconsidering it, with the benefit of portraits, that the forehead was of a peculiar depressed and square form, which we have remarked in several other men of comical genius.

Mr Barham's biographer informs us that the legends were chiefly concocted from stories picked up in conversation: many of the anecdotes on which they are founded had been related to the poet by his friend Mrs Hughes, wife of another of the St Paul's clergymen. The biographer says, 'As respects the poems, remarkable as they have been pronounced for the wit and humour which they display, their distinguishing attraction lies in the almost unparalleled flow and facility of the versification. Popular phrases, sentences the most prosaic, even the cramped technicalities of legal diction, and snatches from well-nigh every language, are wrought in with an apparent absence of all art and effort that surprises, pleases, and convulses the reader at every turn; the author triumphs with a master's hand over every variety of stanza, however complicated or exacting; not a word seems out of place, not an expression forced; syllables the most intractable find the only partners fitted for them throughout the range of language, and couple together as naturally as those kindred spirits which poets tell us were created pairs, and dispersed in space to seek out their particular mates.' All this is eminently true. See, for example, his description of Henry II. of England, where he speaks of the king and his hat in these terms—

'With a great sprig of broom, which he wore as a badge in it,  
Named from this circumstance, Henry Plantagenet.'

Or the passage where he acknowledges

'A metaphor taken—I've not the page aright—  
Out of an ethical work by the Stagyrte.'

Or, as a *denier*, the following—

'Re-cul-ver, some style it,  
While others revile it

As bad, and say Re-culver. 'Tisn't worth while, it  
Would seem to dispute, when we know the result immat-  
erial—I accent, myself, the penultimate.'

As an example of his humour and his rhymes together, a few verses may be presented from a long leash, in which he describes himself sitting down for a day to answer an accumulation of letters:—

'First, here's a card from Mrs Grimes,  
"A ball!"—she knows that I'm no dancer—  
That woman's asked me fifty-times,  
And yet I never send an answer.

"DEAR JACK—

Just lend me twenty pounds  
Till Monday next, when I'll return it.

Yours truly,

HENRY GIBBS."

Why, Z—ds!

I've seen the man but twice—here, burn it. \* \*

\* The Ingoldsby Legends, or Mirth and Marvels, by Thomas Ingoldsby, Esq. Third Series. London: Bentley: 1847. Pp. 364.

From Seraphina Price—"At two—  
Till then I can't, my dearest John, stir ;"  
Two more because I did not go,  
Beginning "Wretch" and "faithless monster !"

"DEAR SIR—

This morning Mrs P—,  
Who's doing quite as well as may be,  
Presented me at half-past three  
Precisely with another baby.

We'll name it John, and know with pleasure  
You'll stand"—Five guineas more, confound it !—  
I wish they'd called it Nebuchadnezzar,  
Or thrown it in the Thames, and drowned it.

What have we next ? A civil dun :  
"John Brown would take it as a favour"—  
Another, and a surlier one,  
"I can't put up with *such* behaviour."

"Bill so long standing"—"quite tired out"—  
"Must sit down to insist on payment"—  
"Called ten times." Here's a fuss about  
A few coats, waistcoats, and small raiment !

For once I'll send an answer, and in-  
form Mr Snip he needn't "call" so ;  
But when his bill's as tired of "standing"  
As he is, beg 'twill "sit down also."

This from my rich old Uncle Ned,  
Thanking me for my annual present ;  
And saying he last Tuesday wed  
His cook-maid Molly—vastly pleasant ! \* \*

Four begging letters with petitions,  
One from my sister Jane, to pray  
I'll "execute a few commissions"  
In Bond Street, "when I go that way."

And buy at Pearsal's in the City,  
Twelve skeins of silk for netting purses  
Colour, no matter, so it's pretty ;  
Two hundred pence—"two hundred curses !"

From Mistress Jones : "My little Billy  
Goes up his schooling to begin,  
Will you just step to Piccadilly,  
And meet him when the coach comes in ?

And then, perhaps, you will as well see  
The poor dear fellow safe to school  
At Dr Smith's, in little Chelsea ;"  
Heaven send he fog the little fool ! \* \*

The memoir abounds in racy anecdotes, some of which are extracted from letters and diaries of Mr Barham. He tells several curious ones with regard to a strange custom of the rude peasantry of Kent, who, meaning nothing but kindness, would use means to accelerate the exit of such friends as were dying hard. A man, stretched on a deathbed of game feathers, which are supposed to be unfavourable to easy death, seemed as if he never *would* go—so, said his wife, 'We pulled bed away, and then I just pinched his poor nose tight with one hand, and shut his mouth close with the t'other, and, poor dear ! he went off like a lamb !' Another woman told with great complacency how, when her child's case had been pronounced hopeless, and seeing nothing would ease him, 'we was forced to *squidge* him under the blankets.' These facts are new to us, and they give additional credibility to what we long ago heard regarding the Shetland peasantry of past times, upon apparently good authority. It was stated that in this northern region, when dying persons lingered long, and particularly when they appeared in pain, it was customary to lay a pillow gently over their mouths, by way of closing the scene. On some enlightened person remonstrating with horror against the custom, the people said—"Oh, sir, we only help God awa wi' them !" What would have been barbarity and profanity in others, was in them mere simplicity.

One of Mr Barham's table stories, which we propose to quote, is said to have been picked up from an old London citizen, who was full of 'marvellous instances of judicial acumen displayed by forgotten lord mayors—bon mots of their chief clerks—perilous swan-hopping voyages, and extraordinary white baitings.' 'An old

London gentleman, a merchant in Bush Lane, had an only daughter, possessed of the highest attractions, moral, personal, and pecuniary ; she was engaged, and devotedly attached, to a young man in her own rank of life, and in every respect well worthy of her choice ; all preliminaries were arranged, and the marriage, after two or three postponements, was fixed, "positively for the last time of marrying," to take place on Thursday, April 15, 18—.

'On the preceding Monday, the bridegroom elect (who was to have received £10,000 down on his wedding-day, and a further sum of £30,000 on his father-in-law's dying, as there was hope he soon would) had some little jealous squabbling with his intended at an evening party ; the "tiff" arose in consequence of his paying more attention than she thought justifiable to a young lady with sparkling e'en and inimitable ringlets. The gentleman retorted, and spoke slightly of a certain cousin, whose waistcoat was the admiration of the assembly, and which, it was hinted darkly, had been embroidered by the fair hand of the heiress in question. He added, in conclusion, that it would be time enough for him to be schooled when they were married ; that (reader, pardon the unavoidable expression !) she was *putting on the breeches* "a little too soon !"

'After supper, both the lovers had become more cool ; iced champagne and cold chicken had done their work, and leave was taken by the bridegroom *in posse*, in kindly and affectionate, if not in such enthusiastic terms, as had previously terminated their meetings.

'On the next morning the swain thought with some remorse on the angry feeling he had exhibited, and the cutting sarcasm with which he had given it vent ; and, as a part of his *amende honorable*, packed up with great care a magnificent satin dress, which he had previously bespoke for his beloved, and which had been sent home to him in the interval, and transmitted to the lady, with a note to the following effect :—

"DEAREST \* \* \*—I have been unable to close my eyes all night, in consequence of thinking on our foolish misunderstanding last evening. Pray, pardon me, and, in token of your forgiveness, deign to accept the accompanying dress, and wear it for the sake of your ever affectionate \* \* \*"

'Having written the note, he gave it to his shopman to deliver with the parcel ; but as a pair of his nether garments happened at the time to stand in need of repairing, he availed himself of the opportunity offered by his servant having to pass the tailor's shop in his way to Bush Lane, and desired him to leave them, packed in another parcel, on his road.

'The reader foresees the inevitable *contretemps*. Yes, the man made the fatal blunder !—consigned the satin robes to Mr Snip, and left the note, together with the dilapidated habiliment, at the residence of the lady. Her indignation was neither to be described nor appeased : so exasperated was she at what she considered a determined and deliberate affront, that when her admirer called, she ordered the door to be closed in his face, refused to listen to any explanation, and resolutely broke off the match. Before many weeks had elapsed, means were found to make her acquainted with the history of the objectionable present ; but she, nevertheless, adhered firmly to her resolve, deeply lamenting the misadventure, but determined not to let the burden of the ridicule rest upon her.'

Mr Barham was a zealous conservative, and occasionally employed his wit in behalf of his party, but always with good humour. We mention the circumstance, merely to introduce a bit of irresistible drollery from a letter in which he adverted to the West Kent election. 'What amused me very much was, that on landing from the steamboat at Gravesend, where my vote was to be taken, the rain was falling pretty steadily, and every one of the passengers who boasted an umbrella of course had it in play. A strong detachment of the friends of all the candidates lined the pier, to see us

come on shore, and loud cheers from either party arose as any one mounted the steps bearing their respective colours. With that modesty which is one of my distinguishing characteristics, I had endeavoured to decline the honour of a dead cat at my head, with which I was favoured on a previous occasion, by mounting no colours at all; but something *distingué* in my appearance, as self-complacency fondly whispered in my ear, made the Tory party roar out as I mounted the platform—

"Here comes von o' hour side!"

"You be blowed!" said a broad-faced gentleman in sky-blue ribbons; "I say he's our'n."

"Be blowed yourself," quoth one of my discriminating friends opposite. "Why, don't you see the gemman's got a *silk umbrella*?"

"The conclusion was irresistible. Tory I must be; and the "*I know'd it!*" which responded to my "*Geary for ever!*" was truly delicious."

A memoir of some two hundred pages, spangled all over with droll things of this kind, would furnish of course matter for an extended article. Our object, however, being strictly to present a mere sketch of the stuff it is made of, we content ourselves with the following specimen of the stories which made the after-dinner conversation of Mathews so attractive. The author justly remarks what ample room it would afford for the development of his peculiar powers of impersonation:—  
'An Irish surgeon, named M——, who kept a running horse, applied to him on one occasion for his opinion respecting a disputed race.

"Now, sur," commenced the gentleman, "Mr Mathews, as you say you understand horse-racing, and so you do, I'll just thank ye to give me a little bit of an opinion, the least taste in life of one. Now, you'll mind me, sur, my horse had won the first *hate*; well, sur, and then he'd won the second *hate*; well——"

"Why, sir," said Mathews, "if he won both the heats, he won the race."

"Not at all, my dear fellow; not at all. You see he won the first *hate*, and then, somehow, my horse fell down, and then the horse (that's not himself, but the other) came up."

"And passed him, I suppose?" said Mathews.

"Not at all, sur; not at all: you quite mistake the gist of the matter. Now, you see, my horse had lost the first *hate*."

"Won it, you mean; at least won it you said."

"Won it!—of course I said won it: that is, the other horse won it: and the other horse, that is, my horse, won the second *hate*, when another, not himself, comes up and tumbles down. But stop! I'll demonstrate the circumstance ocularly. There, you'll keep your eye on that decanter; now, mighty well—now you'll remember that's my horse; that is, I mane it's not my horse, it's the other; and this cork—you observe this cork?—this cork's my horse; and my horse—that is, this cork—had won the first *hate*."

"Lost it, you said, sir, just now," groaned Mathews, rapidly approaching a state of complete bewilderment.

"Lost it, sur! By no means; won it, sur, I maintain (pon my soul, your friend\* there that's grinning so is a mighty bad specimen of an American); no, sur, won it, I said. And now I want your opinion about the *hate*; that is, not the *hate*, but the race, you know—not, that is, the first *hate*, but the second *hate*—that would be the race when it was won."

"Why, really, my dear sir," replied the referee, "I don't precisely see the point upon which——"

"God bless me, sur! do ye pretend to understand horse-racing, and can't give a plain opinion on a simple matter of *hates*? Now, sur, I'll explain it once more. The stopper, you are aware, is my horse, but the other horse—that is, the other *man's* horse," &c. &c.

\* And so on poor M—— went for more than an hour,

\* Stephen Price, the manager of Drury Lane theatre.

and no one could tell at last which horse it was that fell; whether he had won the first *hate* or lost it; whether his horse was the decanter or the cork; or what the point was upon which Mr M—— wanted an opinion.'

## NATURAL HISTORY.

FOR THE YOUNG.

THE study of natural objects is now almost universally allowed to be one peculiarly suited to youth—to that period, as Burke observes, 'when the senses are un worn and tender, when the whole being is exquisitely alive, and the glow of novelty is fresh upon all the objects which surround us.' Yet though all this is abundantly evident, it is singular enough that the regular introduction of natural science into our educational seminaries in this country is as yet but of rare occurrence. The period from five to fifteen—that period which is usually devoted to elementary training—is that in which the mind has the greatest avidity for facts and phenomena. It is pleasing at this period to see how the mind grasps at every kind of information regarding physical objects—how it delights in tracing analogies—forming combinations—and arranging and methodising into systems—how, in short, the ideas of beauty, order, fitness, and harmonious congruity take possession of the mind. The young and eager intellect at this period finds such studies peculiarly suited for its powers; there is nothing too deep for its comprehension—nothing too abstract, or too much beyond the calibre of its as yet immature and not fully developed powers. But if this golden opportunity be allowed to elapse, the mental appetite will seek other and more grovelling gratifications: the pleasures, the dissipations, the business of the world, will absorb all the attention; or if other studies are persevered in, they engross and occupy the whole mind, so that rarely, indeed, do we find a love of natural science cultivated in mature life, unless it has been implanted at an early period.

Our continental neighbours seem more alive to these branches of early instruction than we are. There, botany, zoology, and geology are regularly taught in their elementary schools, and their connexion with geography, history, and the arts of life fully demonstrated. To some extent these studies are gradually being introduced into our most approved seminaries in this country, though in a very small number, indeed, have they become regular branches of educational training. They are as yet only timidly introduced as extra and optional studies; encroaching sometimes on the hours appropriated to relaxation, or given so shortly, and at such long intervals, as to fail to make any due impression on the minds of the pupils. We hope, however, yet to see them introduced as indispensable branches of education, with competent teachers, into all our leading institutions throughout the kingdom. In a great commercial and agricultural community such as ours, the elements of natural science, in all its departments, ought surely to be within the reach of every individual, however humble the calling to which he may be destined.

In our richly-endowed educational hospitals, where we occasionally hear of listlessness and insubordination on the part of the pupils, such studies might doubtless be introduced with the best advantage. We know nothing more likely to engage the youthful mind there, both innocently and advantageously, or more calculated to supply the absence of the domestic circle, and all the home feelings, of which they are necessarily deprived.

A little work on zoology,\* intended as a text-book for school tuition, has prompted to the repetition of these remarks. It is the first part of a history of animal life, commencing at the lowest end of the scale, and including the invertebrate animals. It is not merely a common compilation, but exhibits the spirit and originality

\* Introduction to Zoology; for the Use of Schools. By R. Patterson. Belfast: Simms and McIntyre. 1846.

of a mind evidently well stored with accurate facts, and enthusiastic in the admiration of the works of nature. Its illustrations are numerous, and consist of the woodcuts of Milne Edwards's French work on the same subject. Next to the actual objects themselves, good illustrations are indispensable to the student of natural history.

During the past season, an unusual number of those jelly-looking creatures called medusæ, or sea-nettles, have swarmed along our shores. They are amongst the simplest and lowest of the scale of animated beings, and are thus described:—

‘There is much in the structure of these creatures to excite our surprise. Their frail and gelatinous bodies seem little else than a mass of vivified sea-water, or some analogous fluid. “For,” says Professor Owen, “let this fluid part of a large medusa, which may weigh two pounds when recently removed from the sea, drain from the solid parts of the body, and these, when dried, will be represented by a thin film of membrane, not exceeding thirty grains in weight.” They baffle the skill of the anatomist by the very simplicity of their structure. Feeble as they appear, fishes and crustacea are quickly dissolved in their stomachs. The organism of their stinging power is yet but imperfectly understood, and the luminosity which many species possess, equally demands investigation. They are found in all seas, and please the eye both by their glassy transparency and by their brilliant hues. Some are furnished with a central peduncle, and resemble a mushroom with its stalk; others have its place supplied by prehensile arms: some have one simple central mouth; in others both its structure and position are different: in some the margin is furnished with long contractile tentacula, whence the well-known stinging secretion is supplied; in others this formidable apparatus is altogether wanting. These differences, which are easily observable, enable the naturalist to classify the gelatinous medusæ, for such is their collective appellation. Their locomotion is effected by the contraction and expansion of the outer margin of the disc, the animal striking the water in the opposite direction to that in which it is moving. The motion is easy and graceful, admitting of progress in any direction. The lower surface of the disc is covered with a delicate network of vessels, in which the circulating fluids are exposed to the oxygen contained in the sea-water. Each contraction of the margin, therefore, not only impels the animal in its course, but assists in the process of respiration.

‘The medusæ differ extremely in size. Some are occasionally thrown upon our coast which are as large as a good-sized umbrella; many are not larger than peas; and some scarcely exceed in dimensions the head of a large-sized pin. Some species are adorned with brilliant colours, and equal in the richness of their hues the brightest of our garden flowers. When from a small boat, in a glassy and transparent sea, they are beheld rising and falling at pleasure, and occasionally turning over in the apparent exuberance of enjoyment, they form objects of contemplation so very attractive, as to excite the astonishment of the child, while they furnish matter for the contemplation of the naturalist.

‘The species of medusa most abundant on our coasts during the early part of the summer (*Cyanea aurita*), is well known by the four conspicuous lunar or heart-shaped figures which it exhibits. These are of a pinkish or purplish colour, and are, in fact, the ovaries. Four pouches are observed on the lower surface of the body. To these the young, at a certain period, are transferred from the ovaries, and undergo a species of development analogous to that of the young quadrupeds of Australia in the marsupial pouch of the mother. After changes in their size and colour, they exhibit a change of form, become clothed with vibratile cilia, and leaving the maternal pouch, swim freely about, the larger extremity being always in advance. The little creature soon attaches itself to some fixed object, and four arms appear, surrounding a central mouth. The arms

lengthen, four additional ones are developed, all are highly contractile, covered with cilia, and actively employed in the capture of food. The number of these arms increases until it reaches twenty-four or thirty; and the body, originally about the size of a grain of sand, becomes a line, or the twelfth part of an inch in length. During the winter months, it remains in security “where the waves have no strife,” and even throws out germs or buds, which in time become perfect medusæ. But with the approach of spring, the body becomes marked with transverse lines, which gradually assume a wrinkled or furrowed appearance. These furrows become deeper, dividing the body into from ten to fifteen distinct portions, which for a time remain in contact, but without organic connexion, “like piled-up cups.” After complete separation, each part swims freely about, presenting an appearance so unique, that the young in this state has been figured and described as belonging to a new genus. The last change observable is its putting on the appearance of the perfect animal, and under the influence of the sun, the waves, and the currents, becoming a mature medusa. “We thus see,” says Professor Owen, “that a medusa may actually be generated three successive times, and by as many distinct modes of generation—by fertile ova, by gemmation, and by spontaneous fission—before attaining its mature condition.”

‘With regard to the medusæ, we may mention an anecdote which we learned from an eminent zoologist [E. Forbes], now a professor in one of the English universities. He had, a few years ago, been delivering some zoological lectures in a seaport town in Scotland [St Andrews], in the course of which he had adverted to some of the most remarkable points in the economy of the aculephæ. After the lecture, a farmer who had been present came forward and inquired if he had understood him correctly, as having stated that the medusæ contained so little of solid material, that they might be regarded as little else than a mass of animated sea-water? On being answered in the affirmative, he remarked that it would have saved him many a pound had he known that sooner, for he had been in the habit of employing his men and horses in carting away large quantities of jelly-fish from the shore, and using them as manure on his farm, and he now believed they could have been of little more real use than an equal weight of sea-water. Assuming that so much as one ton weight of medusæ, recently thrown on the beach, had been carted away in one load, it will be found that, according to the experiments already mentioned, the entire quantity of solid material would be only about four pounds avoirdupois weight—an amount of solid material which, if compressed, the farmer might with ease have carried home in one of his coat pockets!’

The waters of the ocean teem with life in a variety of forms. We cannot take up a glassful of this element without including many beings of interest. ‘The cheapness of the pleasures which natural history affords, should of itself form a reason for the general cultivation of such pursuits. They are within the reach of the most humble, and are not dependent on costly or complicated apparatus. By means so simple as a glass of sea-water, we have caused the balani or acorn-shells to exhibit a series of movements, which we have never shown to the youth of either sex without hearing from them expressions of the most unfeigned delight. Let the reader try the experiment. Go at low water to a rock on the beach, choose a few of the oldest and largest limpets left uncovered by the receding tide, and incrustated with the acorn shells. As the enclosed animals have then been without nourishment for two or three hours, they will be quite ready for another meal. Throw the limpet-shells into the glass of sea-water, and in a minute or two the acorn-shells upon them will begin to open. Presently a beautiful feathered apparatus will be extended, then withdrawn. It will again be put forth, and again retracted; but with such grace, regularity, and precision, that the eye regards it “with ever new

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delight." And when the same exquisite mechanism is exhibited by every one of them, either in succession or simultaneously, and when we consider that it thus ministers at the same moment both to respiration and nutrition, a train of ideas is excited which rises from the humble shell to Him by whom it has thus wondrously been fashioned.'

#### FACTS FOR THE CURIOUS.

THE moon, when at full, reflects upon the earth only about one three-thousandth part of the light of the sun; and the lunar rays, even when concentrated by a powerful lens, and the focus directed upon the bulb of a delicate thermometer, do not affect it in the slightest degree; hence the phrase, 'the pale cold moon,' is not only poetically beautiful, but philosophically correct.

The volume or bulk of carbonic acid gas expired by a healthy adult in twenty-four hours is said to amount to 15,000 cubic inches, containing about *six ounces* of solid carbon. This is at the rate of 137 pounds avoirdupois per annum; and taking the total population of the globe at seven hundred and sixty millions, the amount of solid carbon or charcoal every year produced by the human race will exceed 46,482,143 tons! Adding to this all the carbon produced by the combustion of fires and gas-lights, by the decay of animal and vegetable matter, the exhalations from springs, &c. there need be no marvel as to the source whence plants derive their solid or woody material (which is principally carbon), seeing that their leaves are specially fitted for the absorption of carbonic acid gas from the surrounding atmosphere.

In Britain, the deposition of dew from the atmosphere is generally less during the continuance of an easterly than of westerly winds, a phenomenon attributable to the different nature of the surfaces over which these winds travel—the former crossing the continent of Europe, and thus becoming comparatively dry or arid; the latter sweeping across the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean, and therefore becoming moist or hydrated, requiring but little reduction of their temperature for the copious deposition of dew to cause upon terrestrial objects.

The atmosphere immediately incumbent upon the earth has the power of absorbing and retaining more of the blue rays of light than that at greater altitudes; and thus when we cast our eyes on high, we look through a volume of the densest air replete with blue light; and so likewise if we look abroad over an extensive tract of country, the horizon of which is formed by distant hills, they appear blue, or, in other words, they partake of the colour of the medium through which they are viewed. If we journey to them, the blue colour gradually vanishes, and at length their ordinary colours appear; and now, looking from the hills towards the spot from whence we journeyed, it in turn appears blue. The ridge called the 'Blue Mountains' in Australia, another of the same name in America, and many others elsewhere, are not really blue, for they possess all the diversity of scenery which their climates can give; but to the eye which first discovered them, bent on them generally from a distance, they all at first appeared blue, and they have retained the name.

'In addition to the numerous mechanical uses of wood,' says Mr Griffiths, 'and its chemical use as a source of artificial heat, the chemist discovers that it is capable of a most curious change or transmutation into edible matter; in fact, a kind of bread may be made from wood. This is effected by selecting the sawdust of the least resinous wood—that of beech, for example—washing it with water to remove all soluble matters, and then gently drying it in an oven; after this, it is mixed with marshmallow juice, and formed into cakes, which are baked at a high temperature; and these, reduced to fine powder, with the addition of a little corn flour and leaven, form a dough, which, when moulded into loaves, and baked, constitutes bread more palatable than that prepared in times of scarcity from bran and husks of corn.'

Towards the end of autumn may be often observed in the fields marks of footsteps, which appear to have scorched the grass like heated iron: this phenomenon was formerly regarded with superstitious dread, but can now be explained upon very simple chemical principles. When the grass becomes crisp by frost, it is exceedingly brittle, and the foot of a man, or even of a child, is sufficiently heavy

to break it completely down, and effectually kill it; therefore, when the sun has thawed the frosty rime from the fields, these foot-tracks appear brown and bare in the midst of the surrounding and flourishing green grass.

The earth—speaking roundly—is 8000 miles in diameter; the atmosphere is calculated to be 50 miles in altitude; the loftiest mountain peak is estimated at 5 miles above the level of the sea, for this height has never been visited by man; the deepest mine that he has formed is 1650 feet; and his own stature does not average 6 feet. Therefore, if it were possible for him to construct a globe 800 feet—or twice the height of St Paul's cathedral—in diameter, and to place upon any one point of its surface an atom of 1-4380th of an inch in diameter, and 1-720th part of an inch in height, it would correctly denote the proportion that man bears to the earth upon which he moves.

With respect to the distribution and growth of the vine, it requires, according to Meyen, at least five months of a mean heat of 59 degrees Fahrenheit to produce good wine. If September and October, the season when the grape fully ripens, have not this degree of heat, the wine is sour; and a country where this is the case is therefore unsuitable to the culture of the vine.

The shores of the lake Titicaca, in Peru, 12,700 feet above the level of the sea, are enclosed by a thick forest of a beautiful rush, which plays an important part in the economy of the surrounding district. Indeed the people of that country would live in great wretchedness if nature had not bestowed on it these plants, for it lies far above the limit of trees, and only a few bushes grow in its neighbourhood. These rushes supply the natives not only with fuel, covering for their huts, and with matting, but they supply material for the construction of their rude balsas or boats, which are merely rush-woven, as are also the sails that waft them across the waters.

The works in operation for draining the lake of Haarlem seem to have stimulated the ingenuity of the projectors to a still more gigantic undertaking, which may be safely characterised as the boldest enterprise of the age; namely, the drainage of the Zuider Zee, which, according to a plan published at the Hague, is proposed to be effected by the construction of an immense dike, cutting off the communication with the North Sea, and by forming a canal between Amsterdam and the coast, into which are to be diverted the rivers which at present empty themselves into the Zuider Zee. The expense of this undertaking is estimated at ten millions sterling. The reader may not be aware that the Zuider Zee was at one time an inland freshwater lake, such as it is described by Pomponius Mela, and that its conversion into a gulf of the sea was effected in the thirteenth century, when violent storms destroyed the barrier between the ocean and the lake. Traces of this barrier still exist in the sandy islands and shoals between the Kelder and Ter Schelling.

We perceive from the newspapers that the South-Eastern Railway Company have established their confidence in the practicability of the submarine telegraph, by making preparations to lay down a line between Folkestone and Boulogne!

#### DAVID RHYS, THE 'CHIEF MUSICIAN TO THE QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES.'

North Wales did not boast of a more perfect musician than David Rhys. Vain was it for any other harper to enter into competition with him at Eisteddfod, or in bower or hall; he won all the prizes, and enchanted every ear. Other bards struck their harps, but no applause followed; and in a fit of rage and jealousy they snapped the wires, and threw their harps aside—at least so says David Rhys. Lords, nay, even princes, offered David riches and honours if he would strike his harp within their halls; but he loved his dear native country too well to be tempted to leave it for either honour or gold. Higher honour than any lord or even prince could bestow was in store for him, however; for one lovely evening in summer, as he was walking in this glen, and meditating on the beauties of nature, or every now and then striking a wild strain on his harp, he was somewhat startled by the sudden appearance of what he at that instant imagined to be a most beautiful little child. The smiling, bright-eyed boy came dancing up to David, and requested the harper to follow him to his father's hall, where, he said, a large party was assembled in the hope of hearing David's ravishing strains. David

Rhys was little in the habit of following anything but his own pleasure; but he now felt as if he was spell-bound, and that, whether he liked it or not, he must follow this lovely infant wheresoever he might lead him. So, without asking a single question, he followed the child up the glen. He was obliged to run, to keep pace with his juvenile and nimble guide; but on turning into a path that led to the mountain, a mist suddenly enveloped them, and at the same instant David was assailed by 'a hundred wry-mouthed elves,' who asked him whether he would travel above wind, below wind, or under wind. A soft voice whispered in his ear, 'soar not too high; but beware how a mortal of your genius abases himself too low.' David instantly exclaimed, 'I will travel under wind!' Scarcely had he uttered the words, than he felt himself gently raised from the ground, and was borne softly and pleasantly through the regions of mist. After travelling in this luxurious style for some time, he suddenly felt that he was descending towards the earth; and just as his feet rested on it, the mist disappeared, and he found that he was standing at the bottom of a magnificent flight of marble steps, that led to the entrance-door of a most unearthly-looking mansion. His little guide was once more at his side, and conducted him up the steps; but when he threw open the door, a scene of such dazzling splendour burst upon his sight, that David was obliged to set down his harp, and veil his eyes with his hands. A chair of ivory and gold was brought for him, and after a little practice, he found he could bear the dazzling light, and began to look around him. He saw that he was surrounded by beings not of this world, for the height of the tallest of the numerous group did not exceed that of a child of two years of age. Both sexes were exquisitely formed; their complexions were alike fair and transparent; and their heads were covered with long and flowing ringlets. The females were attired in pale-green robes, with girdles of flowers, and with dew-drops that glittered like diamonds in their hair. The bard began to play, and his tiny audience to dance; and so enchanting a sight, he declares, was never before vouchsafed to mortal eyes. A most delightful beverage was frequently handed to him in a small gold cup; it resembled nothing that he had ever tasted before, and seemed to inspire him with quite a magical touch on his harp. Midnight had long passed, and still the unwearied group danced on. At length trays of gold, covered with cups not bigger than those of the acorn, and filled with milk, were handed round, and the harper received permission to retire to his bed. His beautiful little guide came forward, and showed him the way to the luxurious chamber that had been prepared for him. David instantly threw himself on a couch formed of gold and ivory, and fell into a deep slumber. Picture to yourself his surprise and horror, on awaking early in the morning, shivering with cold, and aching in every limb, to find that he was lying on the cold ground, instead of a bed of down; and that not one stone was left of the splendid mansion in which, a few hours before, he had displayed his wondrous powers on the harp. But a moment's reflection banished all unpleasant feelings, and pride and exultation filled his heart; for he now felt convinced that his strains had been considered worthy the attention of immortal ears; and that he had spent the night in the presence of the king and the queen of the fairies, and all their attendants, he could no longer doubt. A proud man from henceforth was David Rhys; and many a good horn of ale has he won by relating this adventure, in hall or kitchen, on a winter's night.—*Llewelyn's Heir, or North Wales.*

#### NOTHING IN VAIN.

Although it was midsummer, the snow where we stood was from twenty to one hundred and twenty feet deep, but blown by the wind into the most irregular forms, while in some places the black rock was visible. Beneath was the river and valley of Maypo, fed by a number of tributary streams, which we could see descending like small silver threads down the different ravines. We appeared to have a bird's-eye view of the great chain of the Andes, and we looked down upon a series of pinnacles of indescribable shapes and forms, all covered with eternal snow. The whole scene around us in every direction was devoid of vegetation, and was a picture of desolation on a scale of magnificence which made it peculiarly awful. But the knowledge that this vast mass of snow, so cheerless in appearance, was created for the use, and comfort, and happiness, and even luxury of man; that it was the inexhaustible

reservoir from which the plains were supplied with water—made us feel that there is no spot in creation which man should term barren, though there are many which nature never intended for his residence.—*Sir Francis Head.*

#### ROBERT BRUCE CROWNED BY THE COUNTESS OF BUCHAN.

THE Bruce is on his bended knee—a king, without a throne;  
Of Scotland's realm the rightful lord, yet not one rood his own;  
His altar—the few faithful hearts that gather round him there;  
His anthem—the lone orphan's cry, the childless widow's prayer.

There steps a noble lady forth, and cries, 'The right is mine—  
My fathers for long ages past crowned Scotland's royal line;  
My craven brother loves to stay 'midst English pomp and glee;  
'Tis I will crown the Bruce, and send him forth to victory.'

She placed the circlet on his brow—her hand nor shook nor quailed;  
She said the consecration prayer—her firm voice never failed:  
'Thou fightest not for thirst of fame, nor fell ambition's laws,  
But for our fair and weeping land, and for a holy cause.'

A wailling from our ravaged homes cries, 'Set thy country free!'  
The voices of our little ones call loud, brave Bruce! on thee;  
In counsel wise, in purpose firm, in battle armed with might  
Be thou! Go forth and fight for us, and God defend the right!

The right has won! The Bruce now sits upon a royal throne;  
And far and wide his eye beholds the fair realm, all his own.  
The noblest king that ever yet held sway in Scotland's land,  
Anointed was with woman's prayer, and crowned by woman's hand.

D. M. M.

#### HINTS ABOUT BEDROOMS.

Their small size and their lowness render them very insalubrious; and the case is rendered worse by close windows and thick curtains and hangings, with which the beds are often so carefully surrounded, as to prevent the possibility of the air being renewed. The consequence is, that we are breathing vitiated air during the greater part of the night; that is, during more than a third part of our lives; and thus the period of repose, which is necessary for the renovation of our mental and bodily vigour, becomes a source of disease. Sleep under such circumstances is very often disturbed, and always much less refreshing than when enjoyed in a well-ventilated apartment; it often happens, indeed, that such repose, instead of being followed by renovated strength and activity, is succeeded by a degree of heaviness and languor which is not overcome till the person has been some time in a purer air. Nor is this the only evil arising from sleeping in ill-ventilated apartments. When it is known that the blood undergoes most important changes in its circulation through the lungs by means of the air which we breathe, and that these vital changes can only be effected by the respiration of pure air, it will be easily understood how the healthy functions of the lungs must be impeded by inhaling for many successive hours the vitiated air of our bedrooms, and how the health must be as effectually destroyed by respiring impure air, as by living on unwholesome or innutritious food. In the case of children and young persons predisposed to consumption, it is of still more urgent consequence that they should breathe pure air by night as well as by day, by securing a continuous renewal of the air in their bedrooms, nurseries, schools, &c. Let a mother, who has been made anxious by the sickly looks of her children, go from pure air into their bedrooms in the morning before a door or window has been opened, and remark the state of the atmosphere—the close, oppressive, and often fetid odour of the room—and she may cease to wonder at the pale, sickly aspect of her children. Let her pay a similar visit some morning after means have been taken by the chimney ventilator, or otherwise, to secure a full supply and continual renewal of the air in the bedrooms during the night, and she will be able to account for the more healthy appearance of her children, which is sure to be the consequence of supplying them with pure air to breathe.—*Sir James Clark on 'The Sanative Influence of Climate.'*

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